

From: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 11:23 AM
To: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Subject: Support U.S.-Azerbaijan Relations in FY23

Good afternoon,

Co-Chairs of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus Steve Chabot and Steve Cohen have circulated a draft letter (attached) for FY2023 appropriations regarding U.S.-Azerbaijan relations. This letter will be sent to Chair Lee and Ranking Member Rogers of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. The letter does not include any funding requests.

Also attached are the FY21 and FY22 letters, which your boss has signed in previous years. Given your boss's strong support for the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship, we hope your boss will sign this year's letter as well.

To sign the letter, please reach out to Rep. Cohen's office (rachel.citron@mail.house.gov) or Rep. Chabot's office (mark.erste@mail.house.gov).

Best,
Mark

Mark J. Tavlarides
Principal, International
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
HT-2 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations and Related Programs
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Lee and Ranking Member Rogers:

We write to you asking to recognize the strategic importance of the U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship and the new realities in the South Caucasus in the forthcoming FY 2022 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill.

Azerbaijan is a key player in bringing the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea to global markets. Specifically, the opening of the Southern Gas Corridor on December 31, 2020, is the crowning achievement in this regard. Through U.S. support for this project, Azerbaijan's efforts have strengthened the energy security of Europe and decreased its reliance on Russian gas.

The situation on the ground in and around Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has also changed dramatically over the past several months.

Azerbaijan's restoration of effective control over the lands lost in 1994 has given Azerbaijan full control of its border with Iran. With this change in circumstance, the United States should consider expanding bilateral cooperation on non-proliferation and border security.

More importantly, the United States should support the historic chance for normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We hope that Congress encourages a new era of peaceful cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A permanent solution to the divisions in the South Caucasus requires exploring how both countries could find areas of common ground to end hostilities. We request that the Committee make funding available for programs promoting cultural and educational exchanges between the Armenian and Azerbaijani people, as well as for cross-border and integration initiatives between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In the immediate term, support for the victims of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is critical. We request that the committee support this priority, especially the clearing of Azerbaijan's territories devastated by war due to landmines and other explosives. This is the most urgent challenge, as demining will allow internally displaced persons to return to their homes.

Finally, we are concerned that funds could fall into the hands of the Russian military, as they are currently the only peacekeeping entity in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We respectfully request that as the committee determines appropriate the level of humanitarian assistance to the victims of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, including the urgent need for demining of previously occupied territories, that all funds be provided through the Government of Azerbaijan or U.N. organizations. We believe that doing so will ensure Russia does not gain control over U.S. funding, and that U.S. assistance reaches its intended recipients.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Steve Chabot
Member of Congress



Robert B. Aderholt
Member of Congress

/s/

Scott Perry
Member of Congress

/s/

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

/s/

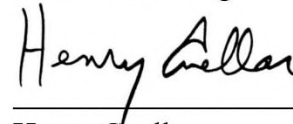
Pete Sessions
Member of Congress

/s/

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

/s/

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

/s/

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/

Lance Gooden
Member of Congress

/s/

Don Young
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
2406 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Rogers,

As you begin consideration of the FY 2021 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you consider the strategic importance of U.S.-Azerbaijan relations when drafting the legislation. We write to offer our views and insights on the issue of U.S. assistance in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

Implementation of assistance has always been a highly sensitive issue for Azerbaijan because its Nagorno-Karabakh region is still under military occupation by Armenian forces. As a result of the conflict, around one million Azerbaijanis were expelled from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding territories of Azerbaijan. The Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has worked with Azerbaijan and Armenia to find a peaceful resolution since 1992.

Though previous negotiations on assistance in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict have been difficult, in previous Fiscal Years these bills omitted specific language regarding U.S. assistance programs for the victims of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. This allowed the United States to maintain its long-standing policy of neutrality in this conflict, continue to protect the U.S. role as an honest and impartial broker in the peace process.

As you know, Azerbaijan has long been an ally to the United States and their support is commendable. Azerbaijan supports U.S. military missions in Afghanistan with troops and transport assistance. Furthermore, Azerbaijan is a stable and reliable Muslim country with a growing Jewish population that lives in peace, demonstrating the strong ties binding Azerbaijan and Israel.

Taking into account the recent Appropriation bills, we request that the Committee to uphold the previous years' practice of Congress to omit any reference to Nagorno-Karabakh and not to support any programs in the occupied territories, which is also consistent with long-standing U.S. approach.

Thank you in advance for considering our requests. We applaud you for providing consistent leadership on this and other pertinent issues over the years, and hope that this continues into the upcoming budget negotiation cycles.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Steve Chabot
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

Scott Perry
Member of Congress

Scott DesJarlais
Member of Congress

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

Donald Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

Alcee Hastings
Member of Congress

Pete Olson
Member of Congress

Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Robert Aderholt
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

Lance Gooden
Member of Congress

Paul Cook
Member of Congress

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress

Vincente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Mark Meadows
Member of Congress

Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress

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Chairwoman
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1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear Chair Lee and Ranking Member Rogers:

As you begin consideration of the FY 2023 State and Foreign Operations bill, we urge you to recognize the strategic value of the U.S.-Azerbaijan partnership in the new global reality.

Azerbaijan has been a long-standing partner of the United States, cooperating on multiple fronts from fighting against terrorism and drug trafficking, to preventing nuclear proliferation, to stabilizing the wider Caspian region. It is also worth noting that Azerbaijani troops were among the last partner militaries to leave Kabul airport, facilitating the evacuation until the very end.

As recognized by European leaders, Azerbaijan will be a key partner in replenishing the potential energy shortage in Europe that may occur from Russian aggression against Ukraine. Moreover, Azerbaijan continues to be a major energy supplier for our mutual ally Israel, despite open threats and covert action by Iran. These threats have ratcheted up since Azerbaijan took back control of its border with Iran. As threats in the region increase, especially those towards energy infrastructure in the Caspian Sea, it is vital for the United States to explore opportunities for further assistance in border security, maritime security, and non-proliferation to Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, as the world watches the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is worth noting that Azerbaijan has provided significant humanitarian aid to Ukraine during this trying time, an exception among former Soviet non-NATO countries that led Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to publicly thank the President of Azerbaijan for this courageous step.

In light of our partnership and shared interests with Azerbaijan, and the United States' good relations with the countries of the South Caucasus, the U.S. must remain ready to help the region achieve an enduring peace. Therefore, we believe that the U.S. should participate in demining activities and refrain from any initiative that could undermine the trust we have built with the region.

In this context, we believe that any U.S. assistance or humanitarian aid programing for areas within the internationally-recognized borders of Azerbaijan should be coordinated with or run through the Government of Azerbaijan. It is important that any program in these territories is in line with the United States' support for the principle of internationally recognized territorial integrity.

Sincerely,